

II

APPERLEY DENE "ROMAN FORTLET" A RE-EXAMINATION, 1974-5

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with contributions by Stephen Speak, Dorothy Charlesworth, and Joan Weyman

SITUATION

THE SITE is located at a height of 123 m O.D. on the rounded summit of Castle Hill, 1.5 km N.W. of Whittonstall on the modern B6309 road (NGR NZ 056581). It lies on the Carboniferous Millstone Grit series of Namurian age, but very close to the boundary with the Westphalian Lower Coal Measures. Underlying the site, a stiff blue boulder-clay of unknown depth had a weathered upper surface of hard, compact yellow-brown natural, overlain by up to 0.20 m of stony plough-soil (Plate IIIa).

INTRODUCTION

E. J. W. Hildyard first visited Apperley Dene in 1949, and with the help of a grant from the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle, determined in 1951 "to recover its plan and discover its purpose and, perhaps, its date and length of occupation" (Hildyard, 1952). He located two rectangular ditches, within which lay a "foundation trench" for a rampart. All three were interrupted by causeways on their east side. No internal structures were found, although only one trench was carried across any part of the interior. Interpretation was straightforward; Horsley had called the site a *fôrt* (1732, 398) and there was no reason to question this identification. Pottery found indicated an occupation in the fourth century, with a hint of some Hadrianic/Antonine activity. As parallels, Hildyard cited "fortlets" at Cardurnock, Chew Green, and on Stainmore, and drew particular attention to Barrock Fell in Cumbria (Collingwood, 1931), which had also produced ceramic evidence of fourth-century occupation.

Hildyard's interpretation remained virtually unchallenged for most of the twenty-five years between his first visit and the present writer's in 1974. Meanwhile, the work of G. Jobey on rectilinear native settlements led to the excavation of another supposed "fortlet" at Hartburn, which was shown to belong unequivocally to the native category (Jobey, 1973a). Jobey's report emphasized the ambiguity of the plans of genuine fortlets and native sites, and emphasized the need for further work at Apperley Dene (*ibid.*, 50-3). Two two-week seasons of excavation were carried out

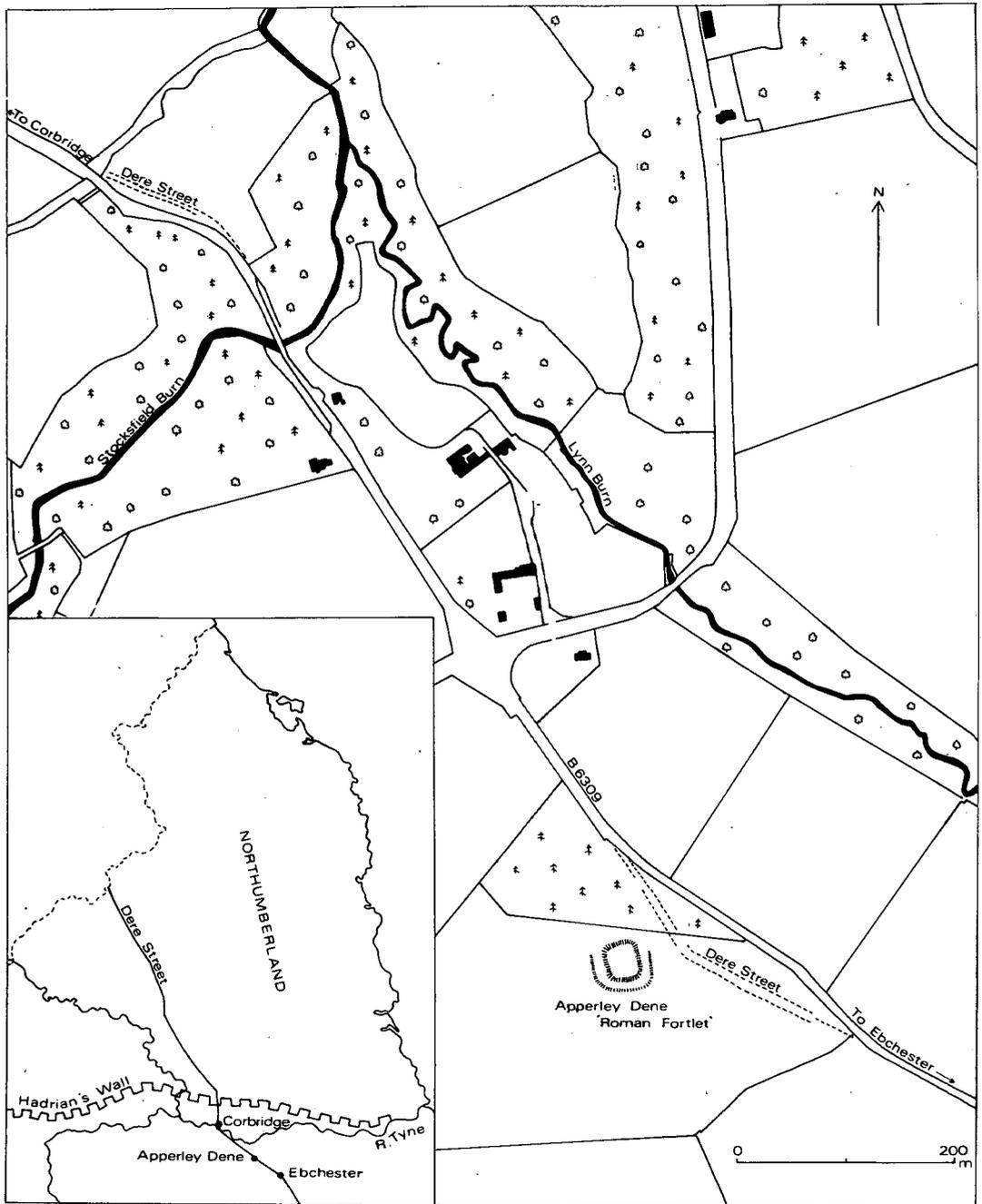


Fig. 1.

in 1974 and 1975.* The work was directed by the writer, with the valued assistance of Stephen Speak, who was responsible for much of the detailed supervision and most of the planning and recording. In 1974, the north-west quarter of the interior was completely stripped, together with lengths of the "foundation trench"; in 1975, the north-east quarter was similarly treated, and the entrance causeway examined for gate structures.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to relate the excavated features to Hildyard's published plan (1952, 226, fig. 2). There are a number of reasons, but the most basic problem is an error in the alignment of the fence between the field and the adjacent plantation in relation to his north point. How much of the survey was distorted by this cannot be assessed without knowing at what point the error occurred. For this reason, no attempt is made on figs. 2-3 to indicate the lines of the main and outer ditches.

SUMMARY OF 1974-5 EXCAVATIONS

Phase I

A rectilinear farmstead was built near Dere Street in the second century A.D. It consisted of a double-ditched enclosure, with a timber gateway through its bank. Within, at least one round timber house lay in the rear part. Pottery and structural indications confirm a short life for this phase, entirely within the second century.

Phase II

The site, after being abandoned for over 100 years, was reoccupied. A new ditch was dug inside the "main" ditch, and internal structures of undressed stone constructed. Thorough demolition associated with burning and freshly broken pottery occurred in the (mid) fourth century A.D. It would seem reasonable to assume that the site in Phase II was a stone-built native settlement, although a military function cannot be entirely ruled out. It was not reoccupied after c. 370.

Date of Occupation

The interpretation of the structural evidence of the site depends upon the dating of its phases of occupation, which relies almost entirely on pottery (figs. 3-4). Although

* Through the kind permission of the farmer, Mr. Alan Batey, a grant from the Committee for Excavation and Fieldwork of the University of Newcastle, facilities and equipment from the University's Department of Adult Education, and labour enthusiastically supplied by students from that department.

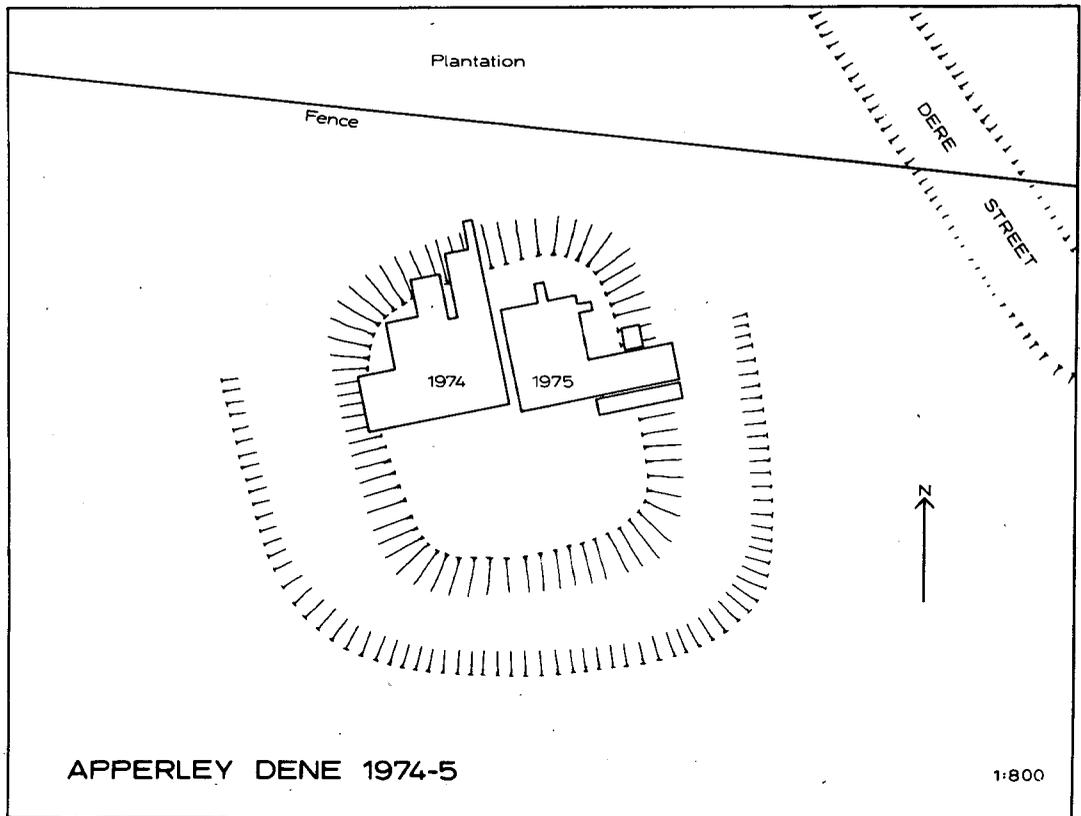


Fig. 2.

it has proved impossible to locate the pottery excavated by Hildyard, his published report fortunately included a complete set of notes written by J. P. Gillam, which make it clear that the 62 sherds found in 1951 agree completely with the more plentiful finds of 1974-5.

THE DATING EVIDENCE

PHASE I

Crucial to the dating of the Phase I rectilinear farmstead is the rim no. 13 (fig. 3) from AF, post-hole no. 3 of the proposed round-house found in 1974 (fig. 6). It

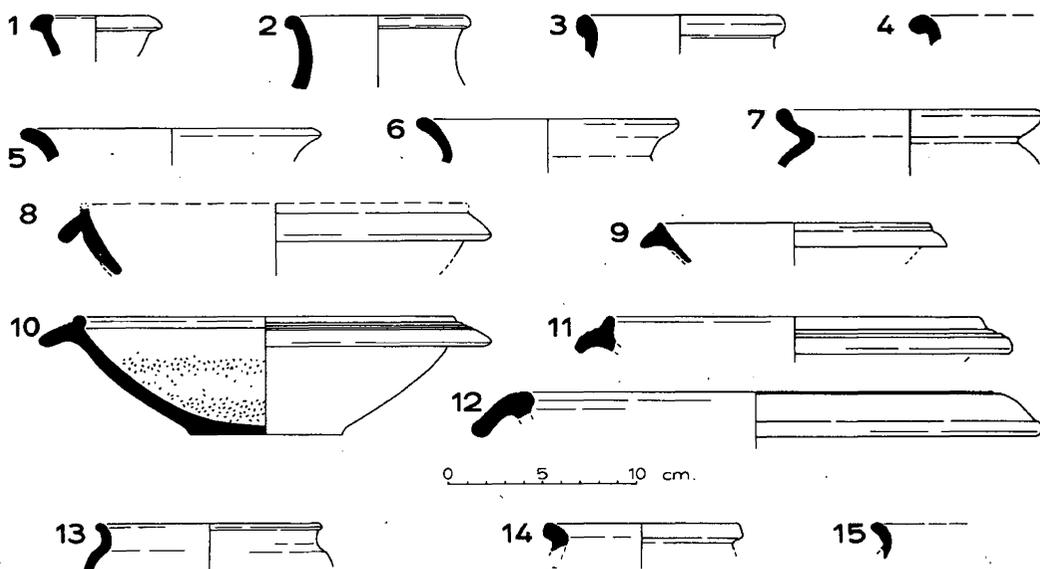


Fig. 3. Unstratified and stratified (13-15) coarse pottery ($\frac{1}{4}$).

must be considered in relation to nos. 1, 6, 12, 14-15, and 33. No. 1 would certainly be out of place in the fourth-century occupation of the site, and a rim fragment from a Gillam type 8 flagon was also found (A.D. 140-180). Nos. 14-15 and 33 are all in fabrics very similar to that of 13 (sufficiently similar to suggest a single source), and all belong to a range of vessels made in grey ware in forms imitating black-burnished ware in the second century A.D.; no. 6 is in a different fabric, but also imitates this ware. The presence of three of these (14, 15, 33) in the "foundation trench" of Phase II is understandable, since this ditch was dug through the interior of the earlier phase. Unlike other pottery from this context, they are all small, weathered single sherds without joining fragments, and are thus clearly residual; in addition, their fabrics do not match any of the diagnostically later vessels. The dating of Phase I must extend into the second half of the second century because of no. 12, a Midland mortarium which began around c. A.D. 160, but must have ceased well before the earliest Phase II material. A number of body-sherds in fabrics of a potentially early date occur in the topsoil and foundation trench, and another was found in post-hole 6 of the Phase I gate complex (fig. 7).

It should be noted that the 1951 finds discussed by Gillam (Hildyard, 1952, 237-8) included a grey rim, probably Hadrianic, part of a black-burnished jar "nearer to A.D. 120 than to A.D. 370", and two orange flagon bases. He concluded tentatively that in addition to fourth-century material "... pieces, perhaps from as early as Hadrianic-Antonine times, are also present".

Samian ware

In addition, four samian sherds from two or three vessels give weight to the consistent dating of the coarseware. All are Central Gaulish: the only diagnostic piece is from a bowl (Dr. 18/31R) of Hadrianic–early Antonine date; the other sherds come from one or two Dr. 37 bowls, and are not closely datable within the second century.

Glass

Of the six items of Roman glass (four vessels, two beads), five were generally datable; of these two vessels were first–second century, one was first–third, and a melon bead was probably first–second. Only one vessel was fourth century. Most were, therefore, consistent with the proposed Phase I occupation of second-century date.*

PHASE II

Like Phase I, the date of Phase II rests entirely on the pottery recovered (fig. 4). Fortunately, the innermost ditch (Hildyard's "foundation trench") produced a large group of pottery from three separate sections, BQ, BM, and CK, on its west, north and east sides respectively (fig. 5). The similarities between the fills, profiles and pottery of the three excavated sections make it clear that the sherds can be treated as a group; they comprise nos. 14–34 in the illustrated series. This pottery consisted of large unweathered sherds, with many joins, obviously freshly broken when deposited. Only three residual rims were included (nos. 14, 15 and 33), and a few body-sherds, clearly derived from the occupation of Phase I. The dates of the various vessels are discussed in the commentary on the fabric groups. It is obvious that the vessels from BQ/BM/CK must belong within the first two-thirds of the fourth century. The ditch deposit does not represent an accumulation of rubbish, but a group freshly-broken at the time of demolition of the Phase II structures. Several factors suggest that it might date nearer the middle than the beginning of the fourth century. The number of Yorkshire vessels reflects the build-up of supplies from that area after c. 300; the castor ware flanged bowl is best placed near the middle of the century, and the convergent evidence from Brough-on-Humber for this form and Throlam or Crambeck flanged bowls reinforces this view. However, the complete absence of black-burnished ware is not particularly helpful, as its supply diminished gradually from the third century as Yorkshire products become more common. There remains the question of whether the demolition with which the group is associated came at the end of a long occupation. Because the site was not mechanically stripped, a good collection of pottery was made from the topsoil, including twelve illustrated rims (fig. 3, nos. 1–12). Apart from the early nos. 1, 6, and 12, with another flagon rim

*The fragments were kindly identified by Miss Dorothy Charlesworth.

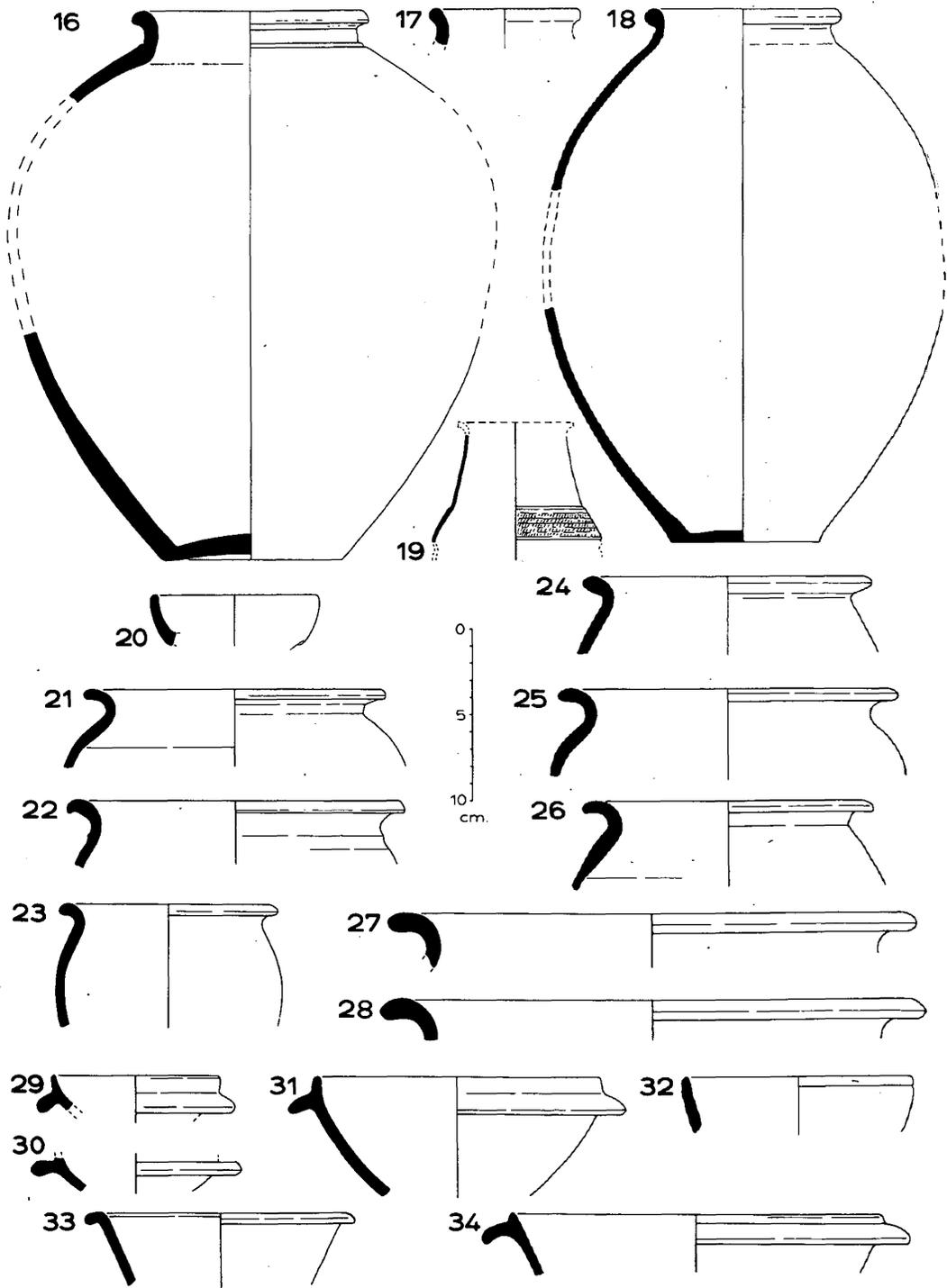


Fig. 4. Stratified coarse pottery ($\frac{1}{4}$).

THE POTTERY—CATALOGUE

<i>No.</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Vessel form</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Gillam type (1957)</i>
1.	75+	Flagon	Orange-brown, hard, with much fine sand, and some dark red grog. Abraded.	(13), 14
2.	75+	Narrow-mouthed jar	Surface light orange, core blue-grey. Fine. See below, nos. 3, 4, 16, 17, 18.	(See 34)
3.	75+	Narrow-mouthed jar	As no. 2.	—
4.	75+	Narrow-mouthed jar	As no. 2. Diameter uncertain.	—
5.	75+	Jar	Grey, hard, coarse surface, some sand and grog.	Imitation of 145?
6.	75+	Jar	Grey, hard and fine, with fine sand.	Imitation of 120
7.	74+	Lid-seated jar	Grey, hard and fine, with fine sand—similar to 6.	Imitation of 157/158?
8.	74+	Flanged bowl	As no. 2.	—
9.	75+	Flanged bowl	Grey(-brown), with traces of lead-grey surface. Fine, hard.	(See 231)
10.	74 AR+	Mortarium	Off-white fine "pipeclay". Black grits. Badly abraded.	278
11.	75+	Mortarium	Pink with white core. Fine, with some fine sand and red-brown grog.	281
12.	74+	Mortarium	White "pipeclay", hard and fine. Badly abraded.	273
13.	AF(1)	Jar	Grey, with traces of browner surface, and blue-grey core. Much fine sand. Badly abraded.	116/17, copy of 119
14.	CK	Jar	As 13, with less sand filler.	(113); ? 115
15.	CK	Jar	As 14.	116-17
16.	CK	Narrow-mouthed jar	Light orange surface, blue-grey core. Fine.	—
17.	BQ	Narrow-mouthed jar	Light orange, fine.	—

18.	CK	Narrow-mouthed jar	As 16.	—
19.	CK	Beaker	Pale orange-buff fine; black colour-coating.	42..
20.	BM	Jar	Grey-blue with grey-buff surface. Hard, coarse with sand filler.	? copy of 152
21.	CK	Jar	Hard black, with sand. Wheelthrown, unburnished.	—
22.	CK	Jar	As 21.	—
23.	CK	Jar	As 21.	—
24.	CK	Jar	Dark-brown to black coarse fabric with grey, buff, and red-brown grog, and many holes resulting from the erosion of calcite grit. Hand-made.	160-1
25.	BQ	Jar	As 24.	160-1
26.	CK	Jar	As 24.	160-1
27.	BQ	Wide-mouthed jar or bowl	As 24.	(189)
28.	CK	Wide-mouthed jar or bowl	As 24.	(189)
29.	CK and 75+	Flanged bowl	Light orange, with blue-grey core where flange meets wall. Fine.	—
30.	CK and 75+	Flanged bowl	Buff with orange core; dark brown colour-coating.	(206, 230)
31.	CK	Flanged bowl	Light orange, with blue-grey core. Fine. The interior surface has been worn away, leaving deep curved scoring from use as a mixing bowl or mortar.	—
32.	BQ	Flanged bowl or dish	Pale grey with darker surface. Fine.	Probably rim of 204, but poss. 320
33.	BQ	Bowl	Pale grey with blue-grey core; traces of browner surface. Much fine sand.	Copy of 219-20
34.	CK	Flanged bowl	Pale grey with slightly darker surface. Hard, fine.	231-2

fragment, all of the unstratified vessels could be of the same date as the group BQ/BM/CK. There are several links with the stratified material—the narrow mouthed jars, 2–4, with 16–18; the flanged bowl, 8, with 29–31; the “Crambeck” bowl, 9, and another undrawn rim fragment, with no. 34; and nos. 5 and 7—imitations of contemporary cooking pots—with no. 20.

It would therefore seem that the occupation represented by Phase II did not start before *c.* A.D. 300, and that to judge by the topsoil pottery, need only have lasted a short time within the first two-thirds of the fourth century.

Mortaria

Three mortaria are represented by illustrated rims (10–12); in addition, another rim similar to no. 10 was found in the topsoil, and a large base fragment also occurred. With the exception of no. 11, all are in the Midland “pipeclay” fabric, commonest in the North in the third and into the fourth centuries A.D., being completely replaced by Crambeck mortaria after the 367 “Picts’ War”. No. 11 has a different fabric with a pinkish surface: it may once have possessed the cream slip of Gillam’s type-specimen. No. 12 must belong to the later second or third century A.D.; it exactly matches Simpson, 1976, Pl. XIV no. 29, dated by K. F. Hartley to *c.* A.D. 160–230 (*ibid.*, 148).

Colour-coated ware

The beaker no. 19 has the distinctive shoulder formation of Gillam’s type 42, which, like type 43 may have been made at Crambeck or a similar site. Both are presumably imitations of colour-coated ware types; our no. 19 is therefore an example of the form which type 42 copied, extremely accurately. Two other rouletted beakers were represented by sherds, one in the “foundation trench”, another in the topsoil in 1974. Some further fragments came from an indented beaker (Gillam type 54, A.D. 260–330). None of these show the coarseness of the latest types (such as Gillam types 56–8), and would all be well placed in the earlier fourth century, suggested by other pottery from the “foundation trench”.

The dating given by Gillam for flanged bowls in Castor ware is 360–400 (types 206, 230). This is supported at Brough-on-Humber by the earliest example coming from a road level around the middle of the century (Wacher, 1969, 167, no. 367). But the form was made throughout the fourth century, and perhaps earlier, in the Nene Valley (Hartley, 1972, 23, fig. 3, no. 8, p. 25). The date of its first appearance in the North must therefore be slightly flexible.

“Huntcliff ware”

Nos. 24–28 are all in the same distinctive hand-made fabric generally known as calcite-gritted, Knapton, or Huntcliff ware. It is immediately apparent that none of these five rims show the characteristics of the late fourth-century Huntcliff type

(Gillam types 162-3). Three further similar rim fragments occurred in the topsoil, but were so abraded that it could not be ascertained whether they came from further vessels or from those illustrated. Like other Yorkshire products, the ware first appears on Hadrian's Wall around A.D. 300 after a long history of production in Yorkshire itself. Sherds also occurred in features CC, CL, EB, ED, EE and EJ (an abraded rim).

Black wheelthrown ware

Nos. 21-3 are linked by their identical fabric; their forms, although simple, resemble nos. 24-6. They are probably best seen as a wheelthrown ware from the same background as the hand-made Huntcliff vessels, probably also from Yorkshire. Similar vessels occur at Brough-on-Humber in periods VI (200-270) and VII (270-?290)—Wacher, 1969, 155, fig. 62, nos. 227-8; 159, fig. 64, no. 288.

Throlam or Crambeck ware

Nos. 9, 32 and 34 fall into the range of fine grey fabrics usually termed Crambeck, although the writer has not examined sherds from Throlam to examine precise differences between the very similar flanged bowls made on the two sites (Corder, 1928; 1930). The ware is commonest in the Hadrian's Wall area in the late fourth century A.D., but appears earlier. Nos. 9 and 34 have the characteristic rim sections of one of this ware's commonest forms (Corder, 1928, Pl. 1). No. 34 lacks the internal wavy line which appears on many of the latest Crambeck bowls; enough of its wall survives to make this certain, but the surface of no. 9 is too abraded to allow the same observation to be made. The form was made in the late third and fourth centuries, as the particular kilns examined by Corder demonstrated; at Brough, Throlam bowls of this form first appear towards the end of period VIII (A.D. 290-370—Wacher, 1969, 164, fig. 66, no. 348; 167, fig. 67, no. 362). Rim no. 32 may come either from a flanged bowl or a straight-sided dish (Corder, 1928, Pl. I, 20, or Pl. III, nos. 52-3). The latter was very common at the Crambeck kilns, the former rare. At Throlam, which extends back to an earlier date (Wacher, 1969, 134-5), only the latter was represented, by a single example (Corder, 1930, 39, fig. 16, no. 110).

Orange and grey layered fabric

This very fine fabric with no filler unites the tall narrow-mouthed jars (2-4, 16-18) and the flanged bowls (8, 29, 31). Neither form has direct equivalents in Gillam's type series (1957). No direct parallels can be put forward for the jars, but the bowls are a little more helpful. Nos. 8 and 29 have the rather thickened and drooping flange which is found quite commonly in the fourth century in a variety of wares, but generally with a much higher rim, nearer to the samian form Dr. 38. A bowl of similar size and shape to 29 was found at Langton, Yorks. (Corder and Kirk, 1932, 80, fig. 25, no. 58), but was not closely dated. A bowl nearer to 8 comes from Crambeck

(Corder and Birley, 1937, 403, fig. 3, no. 5). Both are in orange fabrics. No. 31, with its plainer flange can be paralleled at Brough-on-Humber (Wacher, 1969, 191, fig. 76, nos. 678–9, unfortunately unstratified) and more usefully at Housesteads (Simpson, 1976, Pl. XVI. no. 9) in a group of late third- mid-fourth-century date.

The pottery itself therefore provides the basis for suggesting two phases of occupation at Apperley Dene—the first within the second century and the second in the early or mid-fourth century. No native pottery was found to suggest any kind of pre-Roman occupation.

THE STRUCTURES OF PHASE I

The Round-House

Of all the loam-filled features found which it was considered might possibly have belonged to structures, only thirteen exceeded 10 cm in depth (fig. 5). Of these, five found in the 1974 area fit a circle of *c.* 11.5 m diameter.

Post-hole AF contained a Roman rim-sherd (fig. 3, no. 13) which belongs to the second century. It was not possible to determine whether it lay in the post-pipe or packing, as the fill was uniform. It may therefore have entered during construction or demolition, but in either case the building should lie within the second century A.D.

Structural comments

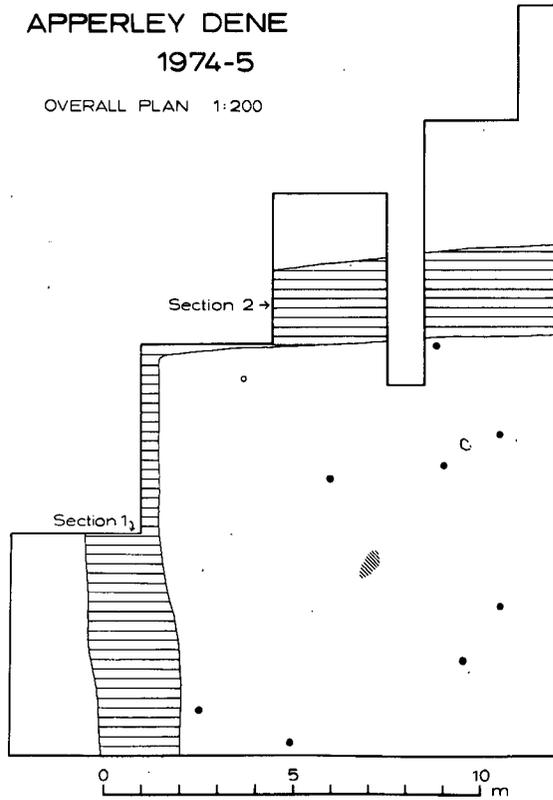
The usual form of building found in timber rectilinear settlements is the ring-groove house, whether on clay or stone “natural” (Hartburn—Jobey, 1973a, 24, fig. 5; Tower Knowe—Jobey, 1973b, 63, fig. 4). The few individual-post buildings on this kind of site are normally large and elaborate (Burradon—Jobey, 1970, fig. 4; West Brandon—Jobey, 1962, 14, fig. 5), reminiscent of classic Little Woodbury structures, although that at Burradon belonged to the Roman period. Many ring-groove houses do, however, also possess inner rings of individual posts (Hayhope Knowe hut 1—Piggot, 1948–9, 49, fig. 3; West Plean house II—Steer, 1955–6, 234, fig. 3). These may be far from regular circles. An examination of West Plean II shows clearly that partial erosion of the subsoil could entirely remove such a ring groove while leaving an inner set of deeper post-holes. This could easily have happened at Apperley Dene, where deep plough scars can be seen on many parts of the natural surface. Otherwise, sets of individual posts may occur just inside the walls of houses with ?turf or stone walls (Green Knowe—Feachem, 1960–1, 82, fig. 3; Milking Gap—Kilbride-Jones, 1938, 335, fig. 4).

The size of the Apperley Dene post-circle would seem too great to have been

APPERLEY DENE

1974-5

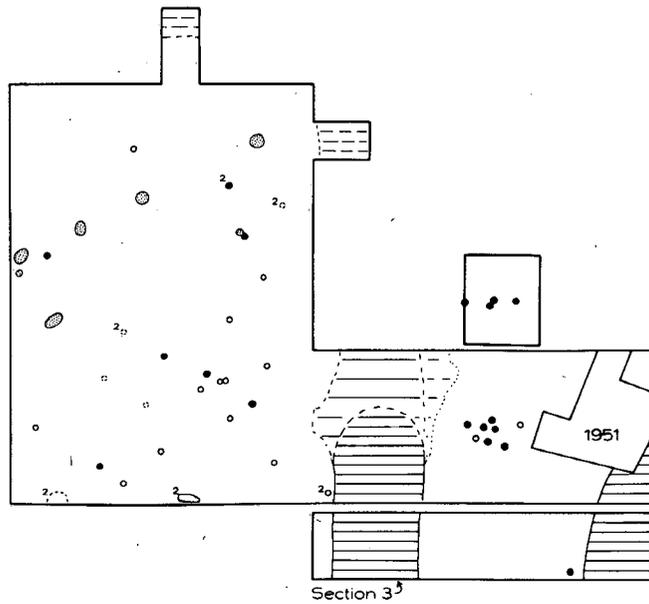
OVERALL PLAN 1:200



- Probable post-hole > 10cm deep
- Possible post-hole > 5 cm deep
- ⊖ Uncertain feature < 5cm deep
- ⊗ Pit with silty grey fill, Phase 2



INNERMOST DITCH, Phase 2
(‘Foundation Trench’)



MAIN
DITCH,
Phase 1

Fig. 5.

APPERLEY DENE
1974-5

PHASE 1
ROUND-HOUSE

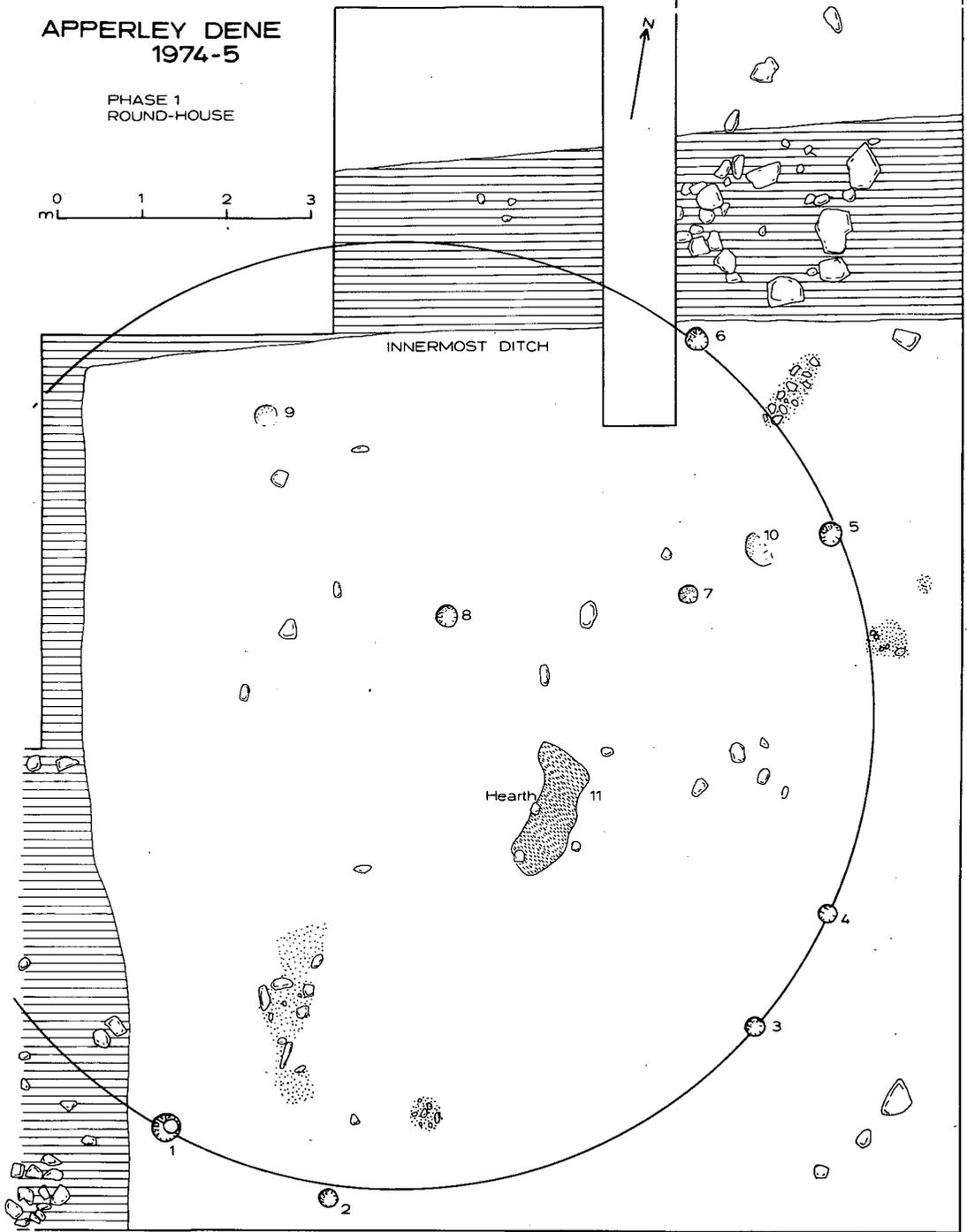
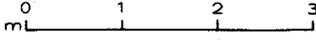


Fig. 6.

the inner remains of an erstwhile ring-groove structure, and its proximity to the probable former position of the Phase I bank would also seem to rule this out. A structure resembling Feachem's example at Green Knowe would be acceptable, however. The post spacings and the very slight below-ground evidence of its wall might leave exactly our remains, and the erratic internal post-holes and hearth are also comparable. This is not to suggest any direct connection between this very early example and Apperley Dene, of course. The simplest reconstruction would be like West Plean house I (Steer, 1955-6, 234, fig. 3), with a single ring of posts supporting the edges of a roof, with infilled walling of some sort. To allow this structure to have been sound, the post-holes must originally have been deep, and much topsoil and/or subsoil must have been removed by subsequent agriculture.

Features assigned to round-house (fig. 6)

<i>Code</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Depth*</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. AZ	Circular (diam. 35 cm) with post impression off-centre (diam. 17.5-20 cm)	15 cm	Brown humus, small stones	Post-hole
2. BI	Circular (diam. 20 cm)	10 cm	Brown humus	Post-hole
3. AF	Circular (diam. 20-25 cm)	12 cm	Brown humus, small stones Roman rim at 5 cm depth (fig. 3, no. 13)	Post-hole
4. AH	Circular (diam. 15 cm)	5 cm	Brown humus	Post-hole
5. AN	Irregular oval, 30 x 35 cm	10 cm	Brown humus. Flat stone at angle against east side	? Post-hole
6. BK	Circular (diam. 25 cm)	11 cm	Brown humus, small stones	Post-hole
7. AO	Circular (diam. 20 cm)	11 cm	Brown humus	Post-hole; roof support?
8. BS	Circular (diam. 20 cm)	10 cm	Brown humus	Post-hole; roof support?

Features assigned to round-house (fig. 6)—cont.

9.	BG	Circular (diam. 25 cm)	2 cm	Brown humus	? Post-hole; roof support? Suggested by position in relation to BS and AO
10.	AP	Oval, 80 × 35 cm. West side vertical, bottom slopes straight up to east side	7.5 cm	Brown humus, small stones	? Connected with AN and AO, between which it lies
11.	AB	Irregular patch of burnt clay and charcoal, 150 × 60 cm	Reddened to 10–12 cm	Charcoal on surface; reddening extends into natural clay	Hearth?

* All depths are recorded from the surface of the natural clay subsoil.

The Gateway (fig. 7)

The gateway of Phase I was represented by two groups of post-holes—eight on the south side, four on the north. The additional strip excavated to the south of the gateway makes it certain that no palisade preceded the earth and clay bank which must have accompanied the gate structure. If the gate was simply hung between two posts, the number of post-holes on the north side would limit the total replacements of the structure to a maximum of four, with four intermediate replacements on the south side only. This does not agree with either the lack of internal structural complexity of the site (the house shows no signs of post-replacements) or with the limited date range for Phase I implied by the pottery. It would therefore seem possible that three out of each group of four posts formed a revetment holding back the body of the bank, while the fourth held a gate post. This would require one total replacement of the south side of the structure, and none of the north. The inner gateway at Hartburn (Jobey, 1973a, 19, fig. 4) could possibly have been of this form—its west side is very similar to the north side at Apperley Dene.

The character of the subsoil and obvious plough damage makes reliance on the detailed shapes, sizes and fills of these post-holes unrealistic. Many possible "features" in the interior proved to have been irregular humus-filled pockets probably formed by parts of boulders being pulled out of the natural clay by the plough.

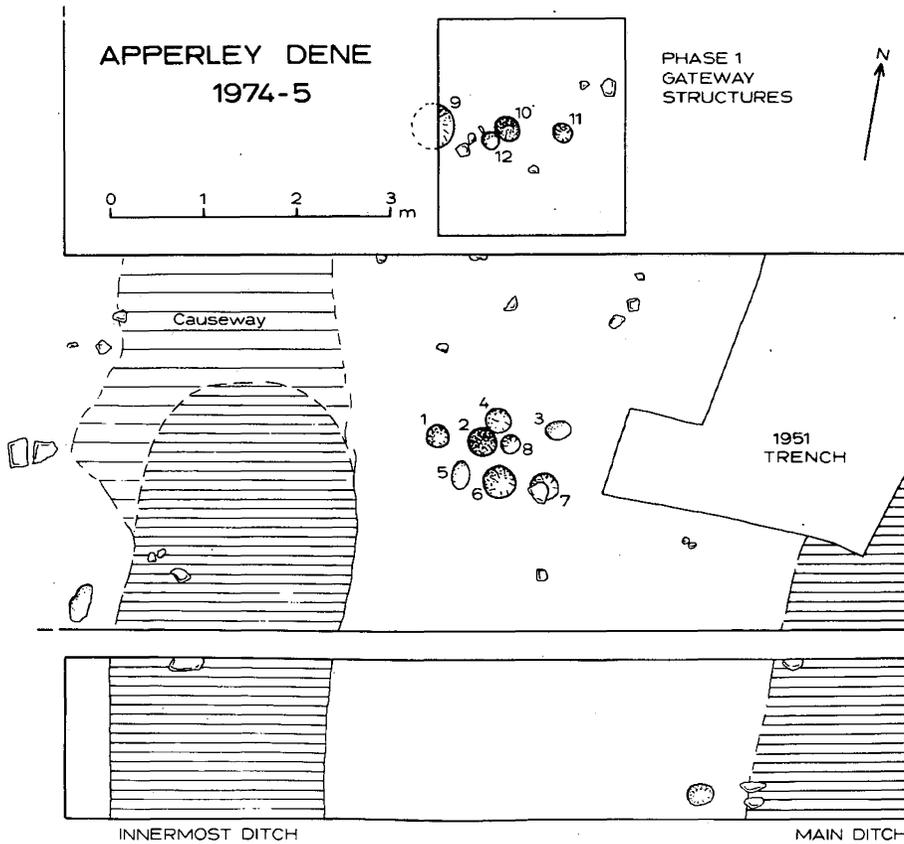


Fig. 7.

Ploughing will have affected the sloping eastern side of the excavated area more severely than the level centre, and many packing stones in the gateway post-holes must have been removed or displaced by ploughshares as the subsoil was eroded. Some of the larger holes with humus filling may therefore be deceptive, and have originally contained stones, and those with stones placed centrally need not have been intentionally packed during reconstruction.

*Features assigned to gateway**South Side*

	<i>Code</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Depth*</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1.	DA	Circular (diam. 25 cm)	18 cm	Brown humus	Revetment post-hole?
2.	DC	Irregular circle (diam. 40 cm)	22 cm	Grey silty fill, flecked with black. Large packing stones infringing on the fill of DB	Revetment post-hole?
3.	DG	Oval (diam. 20–30 cm)	6 cm	Large stones at bottom—natural?	Revetment post-hole?
4.	DB	Circular (diam. 20 cm)	16 cm	Brown humus; large stone on east side	Gatepost-hole?
6.	DF	Rectangular on surface, then circular below (diam. 35 cm)	18 cm	Large stone in centre; Roman sherd in fill	Revetment post-hole?
7.	DI	Circular (diam. 20 cm)	14 cm	Very large stone in centre of fill	Revetment post-hole?
8.	DE	Circular (diam. 15 cm)	13 cm	Gray humus and clay	Gatepost-hole?

North Side

9.	FD	Circular (diam. 45 cm)	18 cm	Brown humus	Revetment post-hole?
10.	FB	Circular (diam. 25 cm)	21 cm	Large stones in fill	Revetment post-hole?
11.	FA	Circular (diam. 25 cm)	15 cm	Brown humus	Revetment post-hole?
12.	FC	Circular (diam. 20 cm)	14 cm	Grey humus and clay	Gatepost-hole?

* All depths are recorded from the surface of the natural clay subsoil.

INTERPRETATION OF PHASE I

The position of the innermost ditch ("foundation trench") overlies the round-house, and lies within the timber gate complex (figs. 4-5), whilst the pottery from its filling (fig. 7) confirms that it substantially post-dates them. The round-house, gate and main ditch presumably all belong to the same phase, dated by pottery to the second century A.D. The outermost ditch would also seem likely to have belonged to this phase. The site in the second century was therefore a rectilinear settlement with a bank and two ditches containing at least one round-house, and falls into a well-known category described by G. Jobey (1960).

The position of the farmstead on a well-drained hillock set within an extremely fertile valley would have been entirely appropriate for agricultural activities. The early Roman sherds from both AF and DF, together with the lack of any native pottery, make it very unlikely that the house was an unenclosed structure like that found at Brandon, Co. Durham (Jobey, 1962, 45, fig. 8).

The overall plan (fig. 5) shows clearly a further piece of information about Phase I. The round-house lies neatly within the 1974 area, and within its circle there are no features which could not easily have belonged to its structure. In contrast to this, the 1975 area produced a rash of possible post-holes (although few were of the depth of those assigned to the house). Their presence could be related to the many agricultural activities which may have gone on in the settlement, and need have no connection with any buildings. The similarity of their humus fillings to the round-house post-holes, together with their separate distribution respecting it, may imply that most of them should belong to Phase I.

An interesting implication of the dating of Phase I deserves consideration. The site was established around forty years after the establishment of the line of Dere Street during the Agricola campaigns. Garrisons lay at Corbridge, around six miles to the north-west, and much closer at Ebchester, little more than three miles to the south-east. Excavations at Ebchester have shown clearly that occupation ceased around the time of the creation of the Hadrianic frontier system, and then recommenced in the Antonine period, presumably after the withdrawal from Scotland around A.D. 165 (Maxfield and Reed, 1975). All of the Phase I pottery from Apperley Dene fits into a fifty-year bracket from A.D. 120 to 170, which coincides exactly with the abandonment of Ebchester fort. Such a maximum period would be consistent with the simple structural record of the farmstead, without evidence for the replacement of the house, and only partial replacement of the gateway. It would seem to be possible to infer that the area was "demilitarized" to some extent during the abandonment of Ebchester fort, perhaps because of the consequent reduction in the importance of Dere Street. There may have been an intention to organize the area into normal civilian development, but the unforeseen return of garrisons from Scotland coincides with the interruption of the farmstead's occupation for well over a century.

Apperley Dene may thus offer a complementary situation to that found at Milking Gap (Kilbride-Jones, 1938). There, a native site was brought to an end because it lay in the way of Hadrian's Wall and its associated works, whereas at Apperley Dene the establishment of a farmstead beside an important military road was permitted when a nearby garrison was removed.* However, its subsequent abandonment in the 160s would seem to indicate that a repetition of the Milking Gap displacement then occurred (Gillam, 1961, 63).

Ironically, if this information had been fully revealed by the 1951 excavations, it would have supported the supposed official military influence behind the establishment of rectilinear (and therefore, it was thought, Romanized) native settlements in the North Tyne/Redesdale area in the second century A.D. Hogg linked this to the occupation of Scotland (1943, 145) and Jobey's basic study of rectilinear sites could not muster sufficient dating evidence to amend this view (1960, 24-5). Since then, of course, air photography has extended their distribution (McCord and Jobey, 1968) and excavation has shown that timber rectilinear farmsteads may have a much earlier origin (Burradon—Jobey, 1970, 93). The occupation of Apperley Dene, lying near Ebchester and south of Hadrian's Wall might well be expected to provide a more realistic reflection of local military conditions.

THE STRUCTURES OF PHASE II

According to both the pottery and structures, the rectilinear farmstead of Phase I lay abandoned from before A.D. 200 to *c.* A.D. 300. The reoccupation is difficult to interpret. No trace of the earlier timber structures would have survived, and the bank and ditches must have become considerably weathered. The main ditch—still visible today—probably remained fairly large, even if partly silted up (Hildyard's sections show a clear division in the filling—1952, 227, fig. 3; 229, fig. 4). A ditch was dug inside the remains of the old bank, of irregular shape and depth; its irregularity may suggest that it was intended to provide bank-material rather than defence.

The Innermost Ditch ("Foundation trench") (Plate IIIb)

A total of 14 metres of the site's innermost ditch was emptied (fig. 5). Hildyard called it a "foundation trench". His oblique section of this feature shows smoothly-sloping sides and a flat bottom beneath the stones (1952, 229, fig. 4; here, fig. 8 no. 4). Sections drawn in 1974-5 on the west, north and east sides all show an

* The native site underlying Site XI at Corbridge is undated; it is not known whether it was actually occupied up to the establishment of the first fort on its site in the later 80s A.D. (Richmond and Gillam, 1955)

asymmetrical profile, deeper towards the inner lip, with far from regular sides (fig. 8; all are drawn with the interior of the site to the right). Below the stone and charcoal present at all points was a bluish-grey filling for a further 10-12 cm, which presumably represents an accumulation of silt before the rapid filling by stone and burnt material; it parallels the "blue filling" found by Hildyard in the main ditch (229, fig. 4; 227, fig. 3). In fairness, he may not have looked closely for this in a feature which by his interpretation *should* have been flat-bottomed to support a stone wall. This blue silt was very difficult to distinguish from the surrounding "natural"—from which it had, of course, derived—in the absence of the distinctive rapid-silt line present in the main ditch section (Hildyard's "blue silt"). As Jobey pointed out (1973a, 53) this "foundation trench" is of unsuitable shape and size for the purpose which Hildyard proposed and according to the pottery its filling with stone and occupation material occurred on a single occasion at the end of the site's occupation. It was presumably dug at the beginning of Phase II, and it cut through the position of the round-house of the short-lived Phase I, which had ended at least 100 years earlier. Because the outermost ditch must have largely silted up in the intervening period, the new ditch probably in effect only maintained the common two-ditch plan of low-lying rectilinear native sites (McCord and Jobey, 1968).

The innermost ditch was interrupted on its east side by an undug causeway, in line with that of Phase I, thus demonstrating the continued existence of the earlier main ditch. The causeway seems to have been eroded, for on excavation the fill of the ditch appeared unbroken. Hildyard's location of its site by a small *sondage* must be suspect, considering the inaccuracy of his published trench plan (226, fig. 2). A section had to be cut into the natural clay to confirm the presence of the causeway; it showed that the brown filling above it was only *c.* 5 cm deep. The exact line of the lip of the south butt-end of the ditch was thus impossible to recover and the position of the north side's butt-end (and indeed its whole course at the north-east corner) on Hildyard's plan must also be suspect, particularly as plough-damage was at its greatest around the edge of the northern quarter of the site, where the ground begins to slope steeply away to the north.

Whatever form the bank which stood within this ditch took, no trace of it remained. It was probably less substantial than the Phase I bank, with its much larger ditch. If it was partly stone-built, less clay would, of course, have been required in its construction. No trace of any gate structures were found near the causeway, although other features did survive in the surrounding area. A bank of modest proportions may only have been equipped with an insubstantial gateway, and a stone facing would not require the kind of timber passage revetment suggested for Phase I. Either shallow features have been obliterated, or the gate supports were incorporated into the body of the bank. At Tower Knowe, where the stone enclosure wall partly survived, nothing but a small pivot hole was encountered at the gateway (Jobey, 1973b, 66).

Three cross-sections of the innermost ditch are drawn here (fig. 8), through its west, north and east sides (fig. 5). In addition, the slightly oblique section cut through its south side by Hildyard in 1951 (1955, 229, fig. 4) is redrawn here at the same

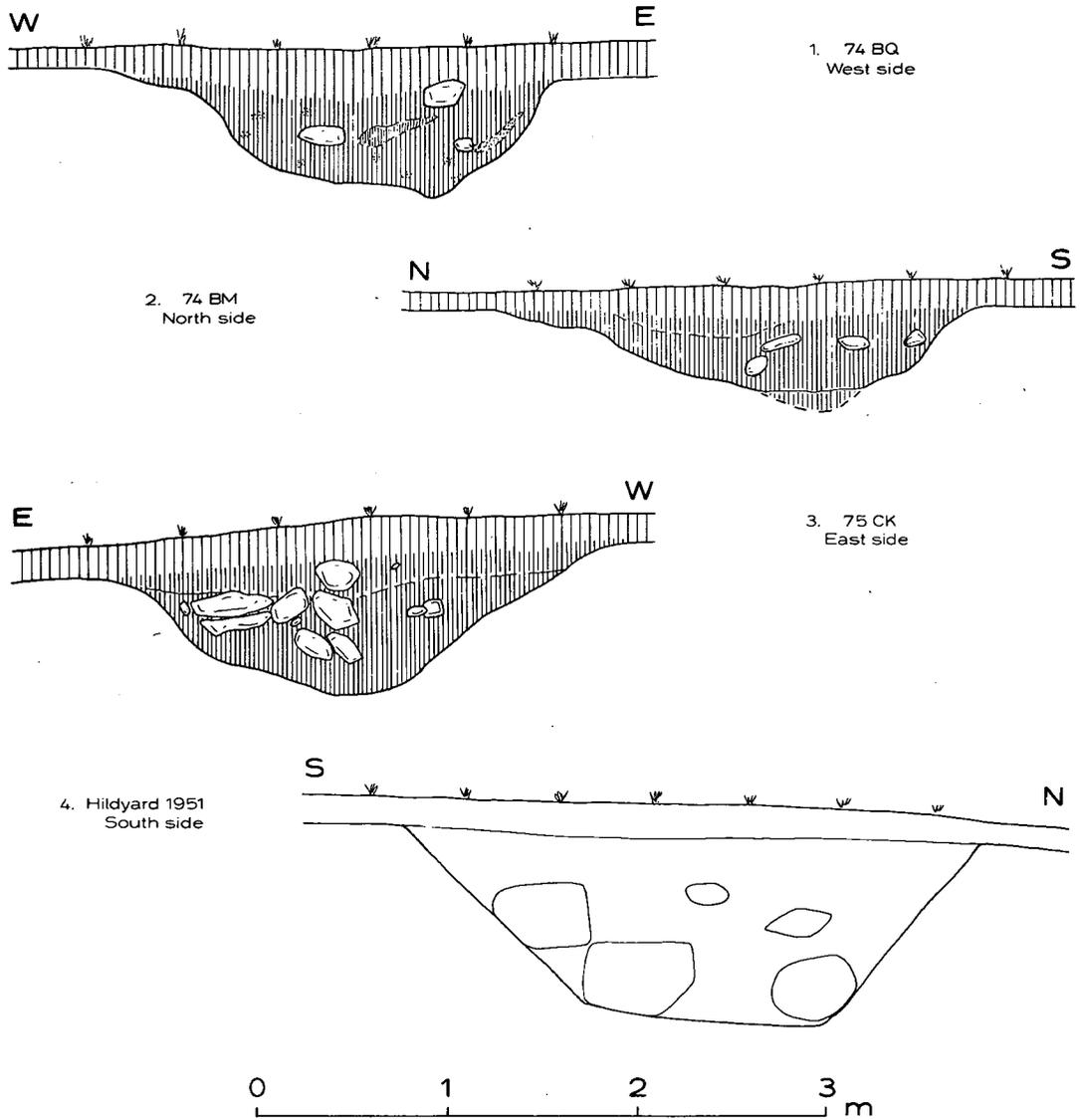


Fig. 8. Sections through innermost ditch.

scale as those excavated in 1974-5. All are drawn with the inside of the site to the right, to allow their profiles to be compared directly. The details of their fills are as follows:

1. 74BQ. Light grey silty fill with flecks of orange daub and charcoal. The silty fill becomes gradually bluer towards the bottom. Near the centre, a layer of blue silty clay, redeposited natural (from collapsed bank material?). Near the east side, a layer of charcoal.
2. 74BM. Main fill as no. 1, slightly sandier at top on north side. The exact line of the bottom could not be determined, owing to the similarity of the blue lower fill and the adjacent natural clay.
3. 75CK. Main fill as no. 1. The length of the ditch nearer to the causeway contained more charcoal and burnt material, in addition to large quantities of pottery.
4. Hildyard's oblique section excavated in 1951 (redrawn from 1952, 229, fig. 4). The filling is not described in detail, only as grey.

The sections are very consistent in outline. No. 1 suggests strongly that the filling came predominantly from the east, the inside of the site. The clay and tumbled stone would be appropriate to the remains of a stone-faced clay bank.

Pits with silty-grey filling

The 1975 area contained several round or oval pits in addition to numerous small humus-filled holes and depressions. The pits were obviously different from the latter, because their filling was a distinctive sandy grey clay with dark brown or black ferruginous flecks. Similar fills occurred in some irregular stoney pockets in 1974, which were concluded to be natural (see fig. 6), but several of those excavated in 1975 also contained fragments of Roman tile or pottery, charcoal, and burnt daub. This, and their regular outlines made it quite clear that they were not natural. The pottery found in them was exclusively fourth-century, including Huntcliff and Crambeck ware. They therefore belong to Phase II.

No clue to their purpose was discovered: it is unlikely that they were structural, and they do not seem obviously domestic. Some industrial purpose may be guessed at; a fragment of slag was found in the north part of the innermost ditch, and a fragment of pottery with a vitrified surface from one of the pits may have been part of a crucible. The pits are indicated on fig. 5.

Other Phase II features

A few of the loam filled ?post-holes produced sherds of fourth-century pottery, or tile fragments. In addition, two features against the south baulk may be assigned to Phase II. These features are indicated on fig. 5 by a small figure 2, indicating Phase II.

INTERPRETATION OF PHASE II

No cohesive timber structures can be put forward to indicate what kind of settlement lay inside the bank and ditch, but if we assume that the reoccupation was again "native", perhaps none should be expected. The developmental sequence of the region's native settlements established by Jobey makes it clear that they were normally converted to stone sooner or later within the Roman period. His excavations of sites such as Tower Knowe and Hartburn clearly illustrate the fact that no below-ground evidence need survive from stone houses. The complete removal of their stone walls by agriculture need leave at most two doorpost-holes and some random internal roof supports (Jobey, 1973b, 67, fig. 5). The presence at Apperley Dene of miscellaneous post-holes, and other features containing fourth-century pottery show that *something* was indeed happening in the interior, and are perhaps all that one should expect to have survived from an occupation with stone houses. It has been argued above that the bank may have been stone-faced, and need have had no below-ground gate features.

Several factors combine to indicate an intensity of activity in the eastern part of the excavated area in Phase II. Apart from the innermost ditch, no features in the 1974 area could be assigned to Phase II. The distribution of pottery was uneven; more than twice as much was found in the eastern part of the excavation as in the western area. Most of the pottery found by Hildyard in 1951 came from the south-east corner, almost adjacent to 1975 CK. The distribution of Roman tile fragments (which only occur in Phase II contexts) is identical.

All of Phase II grey silty pits lie in the 1975 area. It is suggested above that these may be industrial rather than domestic; this might mean that the hypothetical stone houses of Phase II lay in the western half of the interior, and that the pottery and pits indicate activity in the open portion of the site, in the same way that the scatter of miscellaneous post-holes—some of which may well belong to the earlier phase—lie outside the limits of the Phase I round-house. In this connection, the extraordinarily large amount of stone found filling the innermost ditch on its west side may have come from houses as well as a bank; much less was encountered in the north and east sides. If the presence of this stonework were not sufficient to account for the absence of any trace of houses and bank, Horsley saw a "tumulus" near the site which he "found to consist of stones, covered with green turf" (1732, 398). In 1951, the farmer, Mr. F. Batey, informed Hildyard that he had recently removed much stone from the site in the course of cultivation. MacLaughlan saw the site a century earlier, but it had already been enclosed and ploughed, and the "tumulus" (which may have belonged to earlier clearance) had disappeared (1852, 18).

An important question remains—whether Apperley Dene could have been a military post in its second phase. Phase I was undoubtedly "native", but was short-lived, and ended more than a century earlier than Phase II began. There is no reason why the reoccupation should have been of the same character, although the agricultural potential of the site would have remained. All that has been said above

regarding the obliteration of the houses and bank of a stone-built rectilinear native farmstead would apply equally to a military site of little structural sophistication. There is some secondary information about any structures—none of the stone found in the innermost ditch was dressed, and the individual boulders were of greatly differing sizes, unsuitable for sophisticated buildings.

There is nothing in the character of the finds which would indicate either a military or a native occupation more strongly. The complete absence of coins is not significant: occupation by a small low-grade unit would leave few. The quantity of glass found is not inconsistent with a native occupation; in five seasons of excavation by C. B. Burgess at a settlement at Hetha Burn in the College Valley, sherds of Roman glass have been found but no Roman pottery.

The location of Apperley Dene "fortlet" beside a "remarkable turn" in Dere Street has probably influenced its military attribution (Horsley, 1732, 398). The turn is a little over 30°, to take a slightly more northerly line. The road was certainly not aligned on the settlement, as it was not founded until the second century A.D. The reason for the position of the turn was made clear by MacLauchlan (1852, 18) and can be understood easily by examining the line of the road north-west of the site. The change of line was made—at a suitably elevated surveying-point—to negotiate the Stocksfield Burn at a convenient angle before returning more or less to its previous alignment (fig. 1).

Square fortlets with rounded corners are not uncommon in the fourth century—the Yorkshire signal stations are the best known examples, but Barrock Fell and Wreay Hall in Cumbria also deserve attention. The Yorkshire sites do not in fact provide any real basis for comparison. The outer ditches measure around 60 m across—almost exactly the dimensions suggested by Hildyard for Apperley Dene's outer ditch—but it has been shown that this probably belonged to the Phase I farmstead, and may scarcely have been noticeable in Phase II. Even if the innermost ditch were a "foundation trench", it is too small in overall dimensions for comparison with the signal stations; theirs measure over 30 m but Apperley Dene's feature under 25 m. The signal stations are also later than the end of Phase II at Apperley Dene; this is clearly demonstrated by the pottery.

Collingwood's site at Barrock Fell in Cumbria is at first sight a good parallel: it possessed a rectangular stone rampart within two wide-spaced ditches (1931, 113). A similar plan—without any remains of a rampart—can also be found at Wreay Hall (Bellhouse, 1953) a site near the same Roman road (from Carlisle to Penrith) as Barrock Fell. At Wreay Hall the ditches measure around 38 m and 23 m overall, and at Barrock Fell 49 m and 27.5 m enclosing a rampart of around 17 m × 20 m. The former measurements come extremely close to Apperley Dene's main and innermost ditches, the latter are rather larger. Both sites produced fourth century pottery. However, there is no evidence that they are military. Neither contained detectable internal buildings. They were discovered from the air whilst specifically flying along a Roman road in search of sites. The recent discoveries by Prof. G. D. B. Jones away from Roman roads on the Solway plain have made it clear that the area has an overall distribution of native sites similar to the coastal area of Northumberland.

Finally, the end of Phase II must be considered. The pottery evidence is difficult to assess because of the impossibility of giving precise dates to individual types, but the occupation need not have been long. It is unlikely to have begun before A.D. 300, and certainly ended before 370. The filling of the innermost ditch would seem to have been carried out on a single occasion, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there was an intentional demolition. There was no slow silting and gradual tumble of stones; the close-packed appearance of the latter in 74BQ makes this impossible Pl. IIIb). The ditch does not seem to have been open for long even before this filling, as no appreciable silt occurred beneath the stones, whereas it was recorded by Hildyard in the main ditch (1952, 227, fig. 3; 229, fig. 4).

After the inferred clay and stone bank, and perhaps stone buildings, had been thrown into the innermost ditch (and even the upper part of the main ditch), freshly-broken pots were included in and on top of it, with bands of burnt material. In 1951, Hildyard found a large area of burning and broken pottery at the south-east corner of the innermost ditch (1952, p. 232, erroneously called south-west), extending into the interior of the site. It may be that the concentration of pottery and burnt matter found in the ditch in 75CK was part of this spread, and that it really extended further, but has only survived the plough in and over the subsided ditch fill. The burnt material included chunks of charcoal and thick twigs, quite appropriate to, say, the roofs of buildings. The impression given is of the combustible remains of the structures of the site being heaped up and burnt, and its domestic equipment smashed, immediately after the demolition of the bank and any buildings. Because the spread of burning found by Hildyard overlies the ditch and the position of its bank, it must therefore accompany or postdate the demolition and filling. That there was no appreciable intermission between the events is shown by the mingling of the charcoal layers and pottery amidst and above the upper filling of the innermost ditch in 75CK. Charcoal and some sherds were found in a band lower in the filling of 74BQ. No pottery reached the main ditch, but layers of charcoal were present there on top of the stony filling (Hildyard, 1952, 227, fig. 3).

If the fresh condition and many joins amongst the pottery were insufficient to emphasize that the Phase II pottery does not represent a gradual accumulation of rubbish, the mortarium (fig. 3, no. 10) was found shattered but almost complete, lying upside down with its sherds in their correct relative positions just inside the line of the innermost ditch on its north side excavated in 1974, showing that it was broken there after the removal of the bank.

Unfortunately, without even knowing whether Phase II was "native" or military, it is hardly appropriate to make any interpretation of the destruction of the site. Historical occasions for damage to northern sites are abundant in the fourth century, but raiders or looters would scarcely trouble to demolish and destroy such an insignificant site so systematically. One explanation which seems possible to the writer is that after some military episode it was decided to increase the security of Dere Street by destroying a native farmstead which lay uncomfortably close to such an important military road. The recovery of Britain by Count Theodosius would provide an appropriate context; there had been treachery amongst the



a. The site (indicated by arrow) viewed from east.



b. 1974 BQ: stone filling of innermost ditch, partially removed at both ends.
Scale 30 cm.

APPERLEY DENE, NORTHUMBERLAND

native population as well as soldiers and slaves. The detailed re-establishment of the northern frontier area may have included such a punitive demolition of the site. The pottery would be entirely appropriate to this interpretation, and it includes all of the characteristic wares and forms of the early and mid-fourth century, but none of diagnostic types of the period after A.D. 370.

This concept must remain firmly in the realms of speculation, but the evidence cited above for demolition does perhaps make the possibility of a military character for Phase II even less likely.

OTHER FINDS

(For coarse pottery and Samian ware, see above pp. 32–40)

Tile

A large number of small abraded fragments of tile were found. Diagnostic fragments indicate a few imbrices and many tegulae. It would seem unlikely that they were used for roofing; they may have been employed as rough flooring, or during industrial processes, and need not even have reached the site intact.

The total weight of tile recovered was 6.1 kilos (13½ pounds). Its distribution over the site was very uneven; only 0.4 kilos came from the entire 1974 area, all of that from the topsoil. In the 1975 area, the quantity in the topsoil increased in the north-eastern part of the area, towards the innermost ditch. Although much has undoubtedly been dragged off the level interior of the site, the distribution reflects the location of the innermost ditch and several pits with similar fills (see above, p. 51), assignable to Phase II. The area of burning and broken pottery of Phase II found at the south-east corner of the innermost ditch by Hildyard in 1951 also included fragments of tegulae (1952, 232). It would therefore seem certain that Roman tile was only present on the site in Phase II.

Glass

Apart from a number of modern fragments, four pieces of Roman glass vessels were found, and two beads; no glass was stratified. All of the glass was kindly examined by Dorothy Charlesworth, whose comments are incorporated here.

It has been noted on p. 34 that three of the glass vessels were probably used during the occupation of the Phase I farmstead; these were represented by two undiagnostic flat fragments, green and blue-green respectively, and part of a base with a hollow tubular foot-ring made by folding, from a flask or beaker. A deep-blue glass melon bead was probably of similar date. The only fragment assignable to Phase II was a convex olive-green fragment, probably of fourth-century date. A small double bead in green glass was not closely datable.

Iron

A small number of corroded fragments were encountered in the topsoil; none could be identified, let alone associated with the occupation of the site.

Modern Pottery

51 sherds were recovered, from a minimum of 15 vessels. All would fit into the nineteenth century, and probably indicate a period when the site was under plough, and was manured with material including domestic rubbish.

Flint

A small assemblage of flint and related material was found, which has no connection with the Roman occupation of the site, but was of prehistoric date. The report below has been compiled and illustrated by Dr. Joan Weyman:

This group of lithic material comprised 15 pieces, most showing signs of use and the majority had evidence of minor preparation for use. This careful husbanding of tool material is in keeping with many other collections of flint occupation debris in north-east England—an area without natural flint except from glacial sources. That this was the probable origin of most of the flint used is shown both by the lack of uniformity in colour and by the pebble cortex. The presence of two pieces with chalk cortex suggests that there was at least some degree of communication or trading activity.

Among the individual pieces, there was a burin (fig. 9a), a probable early leaf arrow-

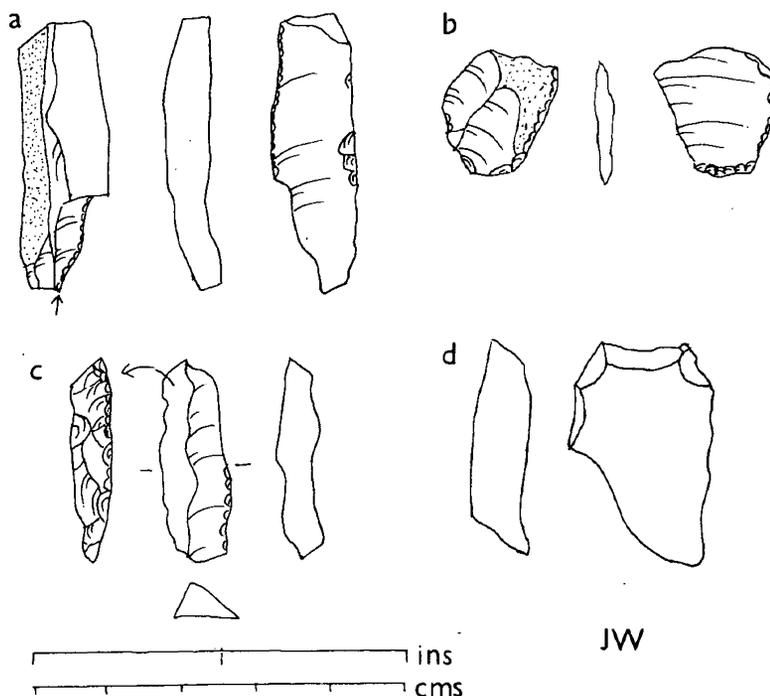


Fig. 9. Prehistoric flints.

head (fig. 9b) and a core-trimming flake (fig. 9c). The neat fine edge-trimming, which occurred on five of the pieces, was just that and no more. The only encroachment on to a surface was very minor, at the basal end of fig. 9b, and neither was there any steep trimming as is typical of many mesolithic tools. The piece of cherty stone (fig 9d) is almost certainly a hollow scraper using non-flint material.

On the whole this group suggests late mesolithic and early neolithic contexts and there is no reason why they should not be contemporaneous.

Illustrated fragments

Fig. 9a. Blade of mid-grey speckled flint with a pebble cortex. Burin flake removed as shown. Minute blunting down right margin.

Fig. 9b. Thin cortical flake of honey flint with dark patches, and a hinge fracture. Pebble cortex. This flake has been very neatly "tidied-up" on the margins and finely trimmed at the bulbar end with a small degree of encroachment on to the surface. It is most probably a simple leaf arrowhead with the point at the upper right angle of the diagram.

Fig. 9c. Light grey keeled flake—a core trimming which has been re-used as shown by some chips on the right margin.

Fig. 9d. Flake of cherty stone with bold hollows on the "forward" edge.

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